

Education (General Provisions) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill 2024

Submission No: 126
Submitted by: [REDACTED]
Publication: Making the submission public but withholding your name
Attachments: No attachment

Submitter Comments:

Ensuring Inclusive Education for Children with Disabilities: A Call for Action Dear Committee Members, I write to you with a pressing concern regarding the proposed changes to homeschooling legislation and their impact on children with disabilities and special learning needs. As a homeschooling parent of children with several complex disabilities, I am deeply committed to advocating for the rights of all children to receive a quality education. I urge the committee to consider the unique challenges faced by families of children with disabilities and to ensure that the proposed changes adequately support their educational needs. For many children with disabilities and neurodivergence, homeschooling is not just a choice but a necessity—an opportunity to create an environment and learning style where they can thrive at their own pace and in their own unique way. It is disheartening to see a focus on making homeschooling more rigid rather than addressing the systemic barriers that prevent many children with disabilities from accessing quality education in mainstream schools. Instead of imposing restrictive measures on homeschooling families, the committee's efforts would be better directed towards making mainstream schools more accessible and inclusive for all students, regardless of their abilities or differences. According to recent research collected by the Home Education Unit (2022), two of three home educating families have chosen to do so because of an underlying disability or health issue. For these children working the Australian Curriculum is not providing them a high-quality education or meeting their needs. They have chosen this avenue because of the flexibility it affords. This enables families to educate and care for their children in a manner that suits their learning style. Most of these students have left mainstream schooling because they could not learn in a traditional learning style. Children with disabilities often face significant challenges in traditional school settings, where rigid structures and standardized approaches do not accommodate their diverse needs. Homeschooling provides a lifeline for these children, offering the flexibility and personalised support they require to learn and grow in a safe and nurturing environment. As a parent of neurodivergent children, I have spent hundreds of hours and thousands of dollars consulting with numerous specialists and allied health experts to determine how to best educate my children. We have liaised tirelessly with their former school, Head of Special Education, and District to try to implement these recommendations. Unfortunately, what my children require is just not able to be achieved in the current mainstream schooling system. My children learn best with a flexible and adaptive project-led learning style. This enables them to become deeply immersed in an area of interest and this will often cross at least 5 key learning areas. Adhering to the Australian Curriculum would render this impossible for my children, and to this date, has been the only learning style that they have engaged in successfully.

As a homeschooling family, I have tried using the Australian Curriculum to educate my family, both at school and at home. It just doesn't work for my children. To this date, I have been fortunate to have the flexibility to choose how I provide a high-quality education for my family. My once struggling and disengaged children with low self esteem in learning goas are now thriving confident children with a passion and drive for learning. Homeschooling has enabled a safe flexible learning approach that is supported by our medical specialist teams. Significant improvements in wellbeing and engagement were evident from two weeks of commencing homeschooling. Rather than limiting the options available to families, we should be working to ensure that all children have access to a range of educational opportunities that meet their individual needs and preferences. This includes advocating for greater resources and support for inclusive education practices within mainstream schools, as well as providing alternative options like homeschooling for those who

require a more tailored approach. The proposed changes risk further marginalizing children with disabilities by imposing rigid curriculum requirements that may not be suitable or feasible for them. Many of these children may require alternative approaches to learning that focus on developing functional skills, fostering independence, and promoting inclusion within their communities. I urge the committee to consider how the proposed changes will impact homeschooling children with disabilities who are unable to learn within the confines of a traditional curriculum. What provisions will be made to ensure that these children receive the support and accommodations they need to thrive academically, socially, and emotionally? Furthermore, I implore the committee to recognise the invaluable role that homeschooling parents play in advocating for their children and providing them with the specialised support they require. Rather than imposing top-down mandates, let us work collaboratively to develop policies that empower parents to make informed decisions about their children's education and ensure that all children, regardless of ability, have access to the resources and support they need to succeed. In conclusion, I urge the committee to prioritise the needs of children with disabilities in the drafting of homeschooling legislation and to ensure that the proposed changes support their right to receive an appropriate and inclusive education. Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,
Homeschooling Parent of a Child with Disabilities